Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1.   cancelled.

2.   (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the distribution of pre-defined important colors includes a distribution of skin-tone colors.

3.   (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the distribution of pre-defined important colors includes a distribution of neutral colors.

4.   (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the distribution of pre-defined important colors includes a distribution of sky colors.

5.   (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein determining the supplemented distribution of colors is accomplished by appending additional pixels to the input digital color image to form an enlarged input digital color image, where the color of the additional pixels is distributed according to the distribution of pre-defined important colors, and then determining the distribution of colors in the enlarged input digital color image.

6.   (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the set of palette colors is determined using a sequential scalar quantization algorithm.

7.   (currently amended) The method of claim 6, wherein the sequential scalar quantization algorithm includes ~~the steps of~~:
    i)   sequentially partitioning the colors of the supplemented distribution of colors into a set of color space regions; and
    ii)   determining the set of palette colors by selecting an output color for each color space region in the set of color space regions.

8. (currently amended) The method of claim 7, further ~~including~~ comprising:

determining the color value for each pixel of the output digital color image by identifying the palette color corresponding to the color space region containing the input color for the corresponding pixel of the input digital color image.

9. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the set of palette colors is determined using a vector quantization algorithm.

10. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the output digital color image is formed by assigning each color in the input digital color image to the color in the set of palette colors having the smallest color difference relative to the color of the input digital color image.

11. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein ~~step d)~~ step f) includes the use of a multi-level halftoning technique to assign each color in the input digital color image to one of the colors in the set of palette colors in such a way so as to approximately preserve the local mean color value.

12. (currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the multi-level halftoning technique is an error diffusion technique that distributes the quantization errors introduced when processing an input pixel to nearby input pixels that have not yet been processed.

13. (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 1~~ claim 19, wherein the distribution of pre-defined important colors is only used to supplement the distribution of colors in the input digital color image in color regions where the input digital color image contains a significant number of pixels.

14. cancelled.

15.   (currently amended) The method of ~~claim 14~~ claim 19, ~~where~~ wherein the additional pixels are provided in the form of a predetermined target image.

16-18. cancelled.

19.   (new) A method for converting an input digital color image having a set of possible input colors to an output digital color image having a set of palette colors, the number of palette colors being less than the number of possible input colors, wherein the set of palette colors is determined based on the distribution of colors in the input digital image supplemented by a distribution of pre-defined important colors, comprising:

a)   determining a distribution of input colors using each pixel in the input digital color image;

b)   providing a pre-determined target image of important colors;

c)   collecting additional pixels from the target image;

d)   adding the collected additional pixels to the distribution of input colors to determine a supplemented distribution of colors;

e)   determining a set of palette colors to be used in the formation of an output digital color image in response to the supplemented distribution of colors; and

f)   forming the output digital color image by assigning each color in the input digital color image to one of the colors in the set of palette colors.

20. (new) A computer storage medium having instructions stored therein for causing the computer to perform a method for converting an input digital color image having a set of possible input colors to an output digital color image having a set of palette colors, the number of palette colors being less than the number of possible input colors, wherein the set

of palette colors is determined based on the distribution of colors in the input digital image supplemented by a distribution of pre-defined important colors including

a)   determining a distribution of input colors using each pixel in the input digital color image;

b)   providing a pre-determined target image of important colors;

c)   collecting additional pixels from the target image;

d)   adding the collected additional pixels to the distribution of input colors to determine a supplemented distribution of colors;

e)   determining a set of palette colors to be used in the formation of an output digital color image in response to the supplemented distribution of colors; and

f)   forming the output digital color image by assigning each color in the input digital color image to one of the colors in the set of palette colors.